

Z88 EPROM

November 1990

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Club Addresses

All articles for **Z88 EPROM** and any membership matters (**except** Software Library) should be sent to:

Z88 USERS' CLUB
68 WELLINGTON STREET
LONG EATON
NOTTINGHAM
NG10 4NG

All requests for software from the Club Software Library, (**but not** special offers), items for inclusion in the Library, and EPROMs for erasure should be sent to:

THE SOFTWARE LIBRARY
Z88 USERS' CLUB
3/8 JENNER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
GU1 3PL

Please note that the **Library** address is the one to use when sending for a list of Library programs - this list is **not** available from the main Club address. Be sure to enclose £1 plus a SAE for the list.

The Club **CLI** Library is run by:

MICHAEL HEY
18 WOODSIDE ROAD
SANDIACRE
NOTTINGHAM
NG10 5GP

Any CLI's for the Library, requests for CLI's and the list of CLI programs (42p in stamps) should be sent to Michael Hey.

ALWAYS include your Membership Number with any correspondence. This is not just to be awkward - now the Club is large it can be very time-consuming searching the database for a member's number. Your number is printed on the address label of each issue of **Z88 EPROM**. Please be sure to enclose a stamped-addressed envelope with anything needing a reply.

Editorial

This is the 24th editorial I have written for **Z88 EPROM**, and they certainly seem to come around very quickly. At the beginning of November I had a two week holiday, and I was unfortunately unable to complete this issue before I departed, which explains why you are reading this in December rather than November. The December issue presents me with even more of a challenge for several reasons; we have a lot of exhibition activity during December, which will take a lot of my time; the printer closes early for their (well-deserved) Christmas holiday; and finally the Post Office will no doubt be well into its traditional Christmas silly season by mid-December.

I shall endeavour to get the December issue to you before Christmas, but please be seasonably generous if I fail!

As I might fail to meet the Christmas deadline, perhaps I ought to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you, and your families, a very happy Christmas, and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

I ought to say at this point that while away on holiday I was very fortunate in that my father popped in each day to keep on top of the mail, and Michael Hey was busy working on some articles which appear in this issue. I am very grateful to both, as their combined efforts considerably reduced the backlog awaiting me on my return.

As I said earlier, this is the 24th issue of **Z88 EPROM**, so the wise ones among you who carefully save each issue for future reference in your Club binders will find that said binders will now be full. Now would be a good time to remind you that the Special Offer price of two for £10 still applies, and will do so until the the end of January, when prices will rise. Why not suggest them to your spouse as the ideal Christmas gift?

The Milton Keynes workshop has come and gone. We eventually had about 100 members attend, although some of you did leave your decision to attend a little late! The day went extremely well, with a number of different workshop groups running throughout the day, and many people finding much of interest on the various trade stands.

From the people who spoke to me, I gather that everyone seemed to benefit in one way or another from the help and expertise to hand, and there was a unanimous thumbs-up to another event in the near future.

My own feelings on future events are mixed. Given the euphoric success of the Milton Keynes day, I would certainly be encouraged to organise future workshops. However, the number attending at Milton Keynes was only just enough for the event to break even, and as I said before, even a week before the day it looked rather bleak in terms of attendees.

I think it is certainly worth another shot at - perhaps sometime in the early Spring of next year, and perhaps this time people will comitt their support earlier, and we can build on the numbers at Milton Keynes. Watch this space for further details as soon as they are available.

You may remember that in the last issue I referred to an increase in spares prices, and directed you to a advertisement for spares in that same issue. Unfortunately, in my enthusiasm to get the issue to the printer, I accidentally omitted the advert! You can be assured that the new prices **do** appear in this issue, and I would be grateful if you would adopt them with immediate effect.

While on the subject of spares, I expect to have difficulty supplying replacement keyboards and displays in the near future. There appears to be a dire shortage of keyboard membranes at CCL, and I have recently run out of stock. I hasten to point out that this is not simply slack stock control on my part - the keyboard membranes have been on order at CCL since JUNE of this year. The latest news is that there is no news, and worse, no sign of these spares is expected before Christmas.

Following on from the points last month about the changes at CCL, I realise that I omitted to pass on their new address, for those of you who wish to write and complain about the lack of keyboards!

The address is:

Cambridge Computer Ltd,

1 Crompton Way

North Newmoor Industrial Estate

Irvine

Ayrshire KA11 4HU

Telephone 0294 222100

Facsimile 0294 222109

Finally, don't forget to come and see us at one of the forthcoming exhibitions - the Computer Shopper Show at Wembley Conference Centre, December 6th-9th inclusive, and the All Formats Computer Fair at the New Horticultural Hall on December 15th.

Newslines

THE CAMBRIDGE TOPPER is dead. Long live The Big Topper! Wordworks Ltd, who make the popular Topper cover for the Z88, can no longer obtain the thin plastic they have been using to make the standard Topper for the last two years. Because of this, production is being switched to using a slightly thicker plastic, resulting in a slightly heavier but much more durable Big Topper! The Big Topper has actually been quietly on sale for about a year, aimed at people who use the Z88 heavily, and are constantly fitting and removing the Topper. In these circumstances, the Big Topper is far less prone to cracking at the corners, a problem which a small number of people have experienced with the standard Topper. The new price of the Topper is £9.50 all inclusive. This is about midway between the price of the old thin Topper (£7.75) and the old Big Topper (over £11.00).

AT LAST SOME GOOD PRESS for the Z88! The highly regarded Consumers' Association have done a Which? report on laptop computers in their November issue. Which? looks at three broad categories of laptop - PC compatible with a hard disk; PC compatible with floppy disk; and non-PC compatibles. They rate the Z88 the "Best Buy" in the latter category, and have some very complimentary comments too. The Z88 at £250 was compared in its category with the Atari Portfolio (£210); the Poqet PC (£1350) and the Psion MC400 (£800), and the comment was made that the Z88 was the only one of these with adequate word processing software.

MORE FROM THE RUMOUR DEPT. - After the Tandy WP-2, and the rumoured Amstrad Z88-basher, now it's the turn of Apple. Apparently spurred on by the use of the Z88 by many Apple executives (with the MacLink package), Apple are rumoured to be thinking about a lightweight laptop which will have Macintosh compatible software, and would be used for portable data entry and subsequent data transfer to a host Mac.

Given that the one-year old portable Macintosh was rumoured for about three years before it appeared, perhaps you'd be wise not to hold your breath for this one....

RAKEWELL HAVE ANNOUNCED another batch of their ever-popular Z88 Training Days for the New Year. These are:

The Tenth Z88 Training Day - Saturday 12th January 1991.
Course-fee £69 + VAT including buffet lunch and course notes.

The Eighth Z88 Follow-Up Day - Saturday 19th January 1991.
Course fee £69 + VAT.

The Z88 Fact Finding Session - Date to be announced.

For further details on these courses, or to make bookings, contact Vic Gerhardi on 0908 366009 or 0296 630617.

JUST CATCHING THE DEADLINE for this issue was a new piece of Z88 software from Dansoft of Denmark. Called "Guardian", it is a machine code routine which implements a password protection system on the Z88. Supplied either on EPROM or PC disk, the 6k of code uses a user- definable password of up to 32 characters - this password must be entered before access is granted to the rest of the Z88 system. The software also gives a further level of file security as it allows encoding and decoding of files by a specific user key. This file encoding is quick - the programmers claim to have processed a total of 500k of files in less than 3.5 minutes. There are various versions of Guardian written for the different foreign language ROMs for the Z88. Please contact Dansoft for further details. Prices - Guardian on PC disk, £25, on EPROM card £50, both plus carriage of £5 in Europe, £8 outside Europe. Dansoft will also put the program onto customer's own EPROMs. Look out for a full review of Guardian in a future issue. Contact Dansoft at Islevhusvej 49, DK-2700 Broenshoej, Denmark.

Helpline

If you have a technical query, write to one of our Helpliners listed below. Please note that you should include a stamped addressed envelope or sufficient return postage for your reply.

CLI Files - Contact Michael Hey by post only at: 18 Woodside Road, Sandiacre, Nottingham. NG10 5GP

Z88 to Amstrad PCW Link - Please write in the first instance to:
Mr A West, 16 Southway, Burgess Hill, Sussex. RH15 9ST.

zBASE, CLI and all Wordmongers products except TX and Comms software - Contact Jason Crook (ex of wordmongers) at 4 Salisbury Close, Princes Risborough, Bucks. HP17 0JF. Telephone 08444 7075. I will also write to order in zBASE.

zBASE - Help on commands and programming. I can accept info/programs on paper. EPROM, zTape cassettes or IBM disk. Contact Robin Jarvis, 27 Gloucester Road, Waterlooville, Hants. PO7 7BJ.

Z88 to Amstrad CPC Link - Contact Duncan W. Kennedy at 32 Otterston Grove, Dalgety Bay, Fife. KY11 5PA.

BASIC Programming - Contact Richard Russell at 59 Campbell Road, Gravesend, Kent. DA11 0JZ.

Interfacing Z88 to various hardware - Mac, BBC, PADs, also UNIX and C experience - Contact J.P. Knight Email JANET on jpknight@uk.ac.lut.sun, or snail mail during term time to Room 66, Hazlerigg-Rutland Hall, Loughborough University of Technology, Ashby Road, Loughborough, Leics, LE11 3TZ.

PipeDream/Diary/General - Contact Keith Winsor at 13 Swansea Road, Reading, Berks. RG1 8EY. Or Telecom Gold 82:TLR1747.

Z88-PCW Link - Using C-Port program. Please contact David Prestage at 47 Knighton Road, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN14 5LD.

Anything Educational - Please contact Bob Shore, 8 Anchor Close, Hathern, Leics. LE12 5HP. Telephone 0509 842670.

Z88 - Atari ST Links - Please contact Ian Salmon, 18 Fillingill Close, E. Hanningfield, Essex. CM3 8UY.

Machine-code Programming - Please contact Richard Smith, 29 Sandhouse Crescent, Scunthorpe, South Humberside, DN16 1JF.

Printer Setups - Please contact Mr. D. Stewart, 44 Margetts, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 9EP. Please note that FULL DETAILS of the problem are needed, including copies of printer interface details and control codes. Be sure to include full return postage if you require any material to be returned.

RANGER

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NEW!

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By kind agreement of the The Z88 Users Club, we have been able to arrange for the entire* Z88 program library to be included on two 3.5" disks ENTIRELY FREE with each RangerDisk purchased. This facility is available to Z88 User Club members ONLY - please quote your membership number when ordering.

When RangerDisk was launched last year, it was aimed primarily at business users with large data volumes, where data transfer to corporate PC systems would be an important consideration. Many such users, like Burmah Castrol and ICI for instance, now use RangerDisk. However, we have been delighted with the number of private customers who have also bought the system.

As one of our private customers recently told us: "RangerDisk solved an awkward dilemma about the future of my Z88 - the availability of virtually unlimited storage and fast file transfer avoided the need to move up to a PC. RangerDisk allows me to go on enjoying the benefits of true portability in the Z88 with the confidence and security of disk storage and backup at home."

We are now shipping RangerDisk version 2, which fully supports sub-directories and is compatible with PC DOS 3.3 and up. RangerDisk is available from stock at £450.00 complete with DiskFile EPROM for Z88, connecting cable and manual. The optional mains adapter is £17.50 and p & p is £4.50.

In a separate development, we can now supply a PC driver package that allows RangerDisk to become an external 3.5" floppy drive for any PC or compatible, connecting via the serial port. The driver package costs £30.00, p & p £2.50, and supports all DOS commands.

* some programs cannot be included because they are not compatible with PC format.

HARDWARE PRODUCTS

Battery Pack Rechargeable external battery pack, connects to Z88 mains adaptor socket, gives correct voltages and 8-12 Hr continuous operation, recharges overnight. Supplied complete with UK mains charger at £37.50. P & P £3.50.

ADAM (Analogue Data Acquisition Module) is an analogue-to-digital converter module for the Z88. It provides 8 analogue input channels with a +/- 2v range and a resolution of 100 µv. Power is supplied externally, or from a modified version of the Z88 supplied by Ranger. ADAM is available from stock at £250.00.

Z88 DATA LOGGER

Designed for use with our ADAM A/D converter, this new application allows Z88 to become a versatile data logger.

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The Data Logger software is supplied on EPROM at £75.00, p & p £2.50. Note that ADAM and Ranger Z88-2 are required.

Hardcase

A ruggedised housing for the Z88. Developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture for recording fish catches at Sea, **Hardcase** enables a standard Z88 to be used in extreme environmental conditions. **Hardcase** is available at £495.00.

Z88

We keep the entire range of Z88 hardware and most supporting items in stock. Please enquire for details and prices.

SOFTWARE PRODUCTS

RangerLink RangerLink is designed for general purpose PC to Z88 communications and features much faster data rates than other PC-to-Z88 products, multiple file transfers and true data transparency.

RangerLink consists of an application EPROM for the Z88, a PC disk (please specify 3.5" or 5.25") and a connecting cable (please specify 9 or 25 pin). The application is driven from the Z88, which displays "windows" showing the current PC and Z88 directories, together with a command menu.

The EPROM and disk also contain the original PC LinkII software for compatibility with earlier systems.

RangerLink is available now at £49.50. P & P £2.50.

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ORDER CODE TAM 3. SRP £149.95. OUR PRICE JUST £139.95. Coder £9.95.

All prices include UK delivery & VAT. Cheque or P.O. with order please. Please quote the order code, and send your orders to:

Z88 Users' Club, 68 Wellington Street, Long Eaton, Nottingham. NG10 4NG

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Wordworks Ltd

WORDWORKS LTD, 49 OLNEY ROAD, EMBERTON,
OLNEY, Bucks MK46 5BU. Tel/Fax: 0234 713757

The following item was delivered to the Club by vampire bat on the night of the full moon on a cobweb-encrusted disc. It is not suitable for readers of a nervous disposition. -Ed.

It Was A Dark And Stormy Night....

by Michael W. Hey (0703)

At this time of year, when the dark winter nights draw in, our thoughts are wont to turn towards ghoulies, ghosties and long leggitly beasties.

I have long desired to explore the murkier depths of the Z88, for there is said to be an evil Bug which inhabits the part they call :RAM.-. This ravenous creature attacks the unwary, devouring all their files in a single bite!

My plan was to catch the Bug in my Error Trap, then stretch it on my rack for a bit (in my capacity as the Club's Chief Torturer of Software) - and Hallowe'en seemed a better time than most to do it.

Great courage and resolve are required for an undertaking of this sort because I was setting out to explore some of the least well charted and most hostile parts of OZ: the haunt of phantom files, where Will-o'-the-Wisps flicker briefly over bottomless quicksands, deep in the bowels of the Z88!... (Who writes this stuff?)

So, donning my pith helmet, and pausing to pluck a sprig of garlic, I jumped on to my bicycle and nipped down to Roy's to borrow his "spare" Z88 (the one he uses at exhibitions). Returning to my labratory in the East Wing I set about my terrible work!!!

What Exactly Is :RAM.-?

Let me pause at this point to explain :RAM.- to those who have never understood it before. (The enlightened may skip on to the next sub-head.)

Memory in the Z88 is divided physically into :RAM.0 (which is the 32k which comes with the machine) and also :RAM.1, :RAM.2 and :RAM.3. (RAM stands for Random Access Memory.

In practice this is the memory that forgets everything if the batteries fizzle out. The colon [and I'm not talking about bowels this time] tells the Z88 that we are referring to a device not a file name.) If you were to buy three RAM cartridges and plug one cartridge into each of the Z88's slots you would have four physically separate places to store files. You are unlikely ever do this - you would not be able to plug in any application ROMs like SpellMaster or ZBase, or use EPROMs - but if you want to have a multi-megabyte Z88 there is nothing to stop you.

Applications like PipeDream or the Diary can use memory in 256 byte chunks from any or all of these separate sections of RAM, taking it wherever it is available. :RAM.- operates in a similar way. Files are saved wherever sufficient space can be found; however files require contiguous memory in :RAM.- as elsewhere (they are not split up into smaller pieces) so a 10k file requires a 10k chunk of free memory. This explains why "No Room" Errors occur when the total memory available appears to be sufficient.

:RAM.- was designed for "temporary" files, which would be erased by a soft reset, in the same way as BASIC or PipeDream applications. Files like S.sgn and K.sgn (produced by [I]+S and [I]+K) appear in :RAM.-. The logic of this is that if RAM.0 is full but :RAM.1 has space the Z88 will use the space available in :RAM.1, rather than giving a "No Room" error. :RAM.- is always present on any Z88, unlike :RAM.1, 2 or 3 which you have to buy and plug in.

Nothing in this life is ever perfect and :RAM.- is no exception. You may have read in "Z88 EPROM" and elsewhere that you must never leave files in :RAM.- longer than necessary because of... "The Bug". The story goes that if you have to perform a soft reset the Z88 will crash spectacularly and require a Hard Reset so that all files in all :RAMs will be lost.

This makes a good tale - rather like "If you are bad and leave files in :RAM.- the boogey man will come get you!" Like most people I had never dared to find out if it was true or not.

I Boldly Go Where The Hand Of Man Has Never Set Foot

Know-alls resume here.

Having borrowed one of Roy's fleet of Z88's I commenced my insane experiments. This Z88 was equipped with a 128k RAM card in slot one, The other slots were empty. To be methodical I produced a set of little PipeDream files called test1, test2, test3, etc. (original names these) up to test9 and saved these to :RAM.1. I used <>TC to move them to :RAM.-. (This reverses the order, so "test1" was now the last in the sequence.)

When I performed a "Catalogue" of all files in :RAM.- I found that the bottom file (test1) had spawned six identical copies. When it (they?) had been erased (so that test2 was bottom of the list) I found that where there had previously been only one copy of test2 there were now eight! Erasing this caused test3 to magically mushroom into nine.

All normal Filer commands like rename, etc. operated just as they do in :RAM.0 and :RAM.1 until they came to the last entry on the list. Then the operation invariably crashed with a "File Not Found" error. Clearly there was something funny going on here.

After a while I became bold and ventured to perform a soft reset.

I went back to the Filer and checked the contents of :RAM.-. To my surprise all my files were still there. I loaded one (test2) into PipeDream and to my even greater surprise it loaded with no trouble! All my text was there intact, so I saved the file back into :RAM.- and the Z88 crashed with a "FAIL". I had to poke the reset button with an unbent paper-clip to get going again. Now I found that test1 and test3 were still there, but test2 had vanished.

Next experiment: could I copy files from :RAM.-? Using the <>TC command I transferred test1 and test3 into :RAM.1, and then tried to erase the :RAM.- versions. Each time I erased a file the Z88 crashed with a "FAIL" message. It is very tedious erasing files one at a time, with a Soft Reset between each erasure.

Sometimes, to be different, the Filer let me erase files one at a time, but if I attempted to erase more than one (using wild cards, or by marking files with little arrows) the first file is erased correctly, and then FAIL occurred when the second in the sequence was erased.

So what happens if you perform two <>PURGEs one after the other? Not much really - the files were still safely tucked away in :RAM.-except once, when the Z88 locked up completely.

After a paper-clip powered soft reset the screen cleared and INDEX appeared in its usual position, and "COMMANDS", but nothing else. The only key which raised any response was the CAPS LOCK key, but I could find only limited use for this key on its own. A Hard Reset was required to get anything going again.

Please note, dear readers: this happened only once. I never locked up the Z88 again, no matter how hard I tried.

One of the problems I encountered in preparing this report was the inconsistent behaviour of :RAM.-. On one occasion I copied files called 1, 2, 3 and 4 (more original names) into :RAM.- (using <>TC again). They catalogued perfectly (no phantom entries this time), and survived four <>PURGEs, and renamings without giving any trouble. I then tried to copy them back to :RAM.0 and they all disappeared without a trace! They all behaved perfectly for five minutes (no FAILs, no errors) and then they all vanished in an instant. On another occasion a soft reset left all files intact except for two sub-directories (plus entire contents) which... simply vanished.

If you have a taste for the really weird how about this.... I catalogued a sequence of files (using <>CF // * ENTER) which ended with a directory. Following the usual list of files, dates, times and sizes there came a complicated sequence consisting of the file name and the directory name and then the file name again, and the directory name again, often followed by a row of question marks. Hmm. Very curious.

Pointers To The Truth.

So what is happening? Well, Watson! In November I had a most illuminating conversation with one Mark Stevenson, who has been conducting some investigations of his own. We think we can safely lay the blame, not with ghosts and bugaboos and things that go bump in the night, but with pointers. (A gasp goes up from the audience.)

To cut the technical chat to a minimum, so that it does not get in the way of the plot, the Z88 stores its files wherever it can find enough space (contiguous space, that is), not in the order in which they appear in the Filer. :RAM.- can spread its files over the whole of memory, so it must have some clever means of putting them back into the correct sequence.

The way the Z88 does this is to keep a record of whereabouts in memory each file in the sequence starts. This mechanism works efficiently in :RAM.0, :RAM.1, etc., but in that part of the Z88's software which controls :RAM.- there is an error, what is known in the trade as a BUG! It is this bug which gets the pointers in a muddle. Once they are muddled up it can be very difficult to unmuddle them again.

An example of this is that associated with the last file in the sequence there should be a pointer which tells the Filer that there are no more files to follow. Instead it often points back to the last file. This is why the last file may appear several times when you Catalogue :RAM.-'s files. It also explains why an erase command with "wild cards" like <>ER:RAM.-/* (which should erase all files in :RAM.-) often end with some noisey beeps and a "File Not Found" Error.

What happens upon a soft reset is not so clear, because the same thing never happened twice. All the files in :RAM.- are supposed to be neatly erased leaving :RAM.- empty and releasing memory, but in practice it appears that the Filer panics instead leaving you with a most unpredictable situation. The good news (relatively good) is that your Z88 will probably not go berserk as the prophets of doom have always predicted. If you are sensible you should back-up your precious files to EPROM, disc, tape, or whatever, and then do a Hard Reset when convenient. Since you back up all your files anyway (don't you!) this is merely a precaution.

You should be aware that following a "FAIL" your Z88 may suffer lock-ups and loss of files, up to several months later. If you ignore this grave warning your Z88 may one day throw a seven and send all your data to that big database in the sky.... almost certainly at the worst possible moment. You are advised to back-up all your files and Hard Reset your Z88 sooner rather than later. This advice comes from the Wise Precaution department. There is no need to panic!

[There will now be an intermission while the careless go to back up their files.]

Putting The Boot In

What about "boot.cli" files? If you perform a soft or hard reset various things in your Z88 which will be returned to the default settings. In order to automate the replacing of your own settings you may write a CLI file called boot.cli, which you save on an EPROM. Following any reset (soft or hard) the Z88 looks to see whether it can find a file called "boot.cli" and if it does this is loaded into :RAM.- and then it is left in :RAM.- to trip the unwary! You have to remember to erase this boot.cli file yourself. But what happens if you don't get round to it before the next soft reset, and the Z88 finds that it already has a boot.cli file in :RAM.-?

After a series of soft resets I am pleased to report that the presence of "boot.cli" in :RAM.- has no effect at all and the CLI executed correctly each time.

Usually the contents of :RAM.- were just as they were before the re-set. Once all the original files there disappeared except two. The directory window of :RAM.- was as follows:-

boot.cli	test	boot.cli
test	boot.cli	test
boot.cli	test	boot.cli
test	boot.cli	test
boot.cli	test	boot.cli
test	boot.cli	test

and cataloguing the files produced an endlessly repeating bottomless pit. Fascinating! I escaped from the catalogue and moved the selector bar on to the list of files. I pressed the "UP" cursor key (which should move me to the bottom of the list). The selector bar vanished never to be seen again (presumably it went on a trip to infinity! Where is Einstein now that I need him?)

As before I suspect that it is the pointers which are to blame. They have gotten themselves all muddled up, so my advice is not to leave old boot.cli files in :RAM.-.

The object of this little horror story is not to frighten you all to death, nor to give the impression that the Z88's operating system is as creaky as a grave-yard gate, nor that OZ is like a ghost train packed with frights.

My Z88 has only crashed three times in three years (thanks to Spellmaster (twice) and Z-Tape (once)) - never due to :RAM.-!

Because I am careful I did not suffer badly on any occasion.

I would advise you to use :RAM.- sparingly and only when you really need it, as a store for temporary files. Erase those files promptly (and erase the last file by name, not with a wild card like *). Avoid using it while testing software! It is not very friendly to employ it in programs to be used by others.

If you do get stuck with a "phantom" file (one which resists erasure by giving a "File not found" error) you can get rid of it by saving another file of the same name, and erasing that. There is no need to call Ghost-busters.

The moral of the story: DONT PANIC - BACK UP YOUR FILES INSTEAD.

Goodnight all. Don't let the bugs bite. Sleep well.

(Sound Effects: Owls hoot. Crones cackle maniacally. Footsteps echo early. Screams scream. Etc. Etc.)

BOOK REVIEW: Z88 PIPEDREAM - A DABHAND GUIDE

by Michael W. Hey (0703)

This book, by John Allen, is yet another addition to the growing army of "How to use...." books. This one puts PipeDream under the magnifying-glass. (You had probably guessed that from the title.)

At the start of this review I should admit to being an unashamed PipeDream enthusiast. Over the three years that I have been a Z88 user I have come to love and admire it. I am even considering buying an Acorn Archimedes so that I can run PipeDream on that, too!

TK COMPUTERWARE

The Z88 SPECIALIST

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When Roy asked me to review the new Dabhand guide I was filled with enthusiasm. Has the book done justice to my favourite piece of software?

John Allen gets off to a good start (on page 13) by posing the question "You may be wondering why, if the Z88 is so intuitive to use, is there a need for a book such as this on the subject?" Why indeed!

The author devotes 215 pages to PipeDream (as opposed to 90 in the User guide) so he has about twice the space as the User Guide in which to explain how to make PipeDream do its stuff.

His method is to go over the material in the User Guide in rather more detail, adding a few more topics (such as mail merge). This he does well: his style is easy to read and easy to understand.

Mr Allen starts in elementary mode explaining that you may suspend activities and return to them later, and that the diamond key is used for issuing commands without the bother of using a menu. He assumes that you know nothing about the Z88 and have never used one before. On page 22 he really gets the bit between his teeth and explains how to write a simple letter. By page 44 we learn about centring text and then get on to justification. The pace is easy and the explanations are clear.

And so we go on through Searching and Replacing, Spreadsheets, Databases, Files (using the Filer), Printing (and the PrinterEd), PipeDream Expressions, Mail-Merging (as promised) and PipeDream as an Integrated Tool (I liked this last chapter best). These subjects are all covered carefully and thoroughly.

The final two chapters give a quick plug for Computer Concepts' SpellMaster and then explain about transferring files to and from PC's, Macintoshes, BBC's and Archimedeses (Archimedi?), etc., etc., and file back-up using Z-Tape.

The book ends with seven appendices which explain about the Options page, discuss differences between PC, Archimedes and Z88 PipeDreams, explain how to share a printer with a BBC micro, list all the <> commands in alphabetical order (including one which is new to me: and you will have to buy the book to find out what it is!), list ASCII codes, explain the basics of the UK Data Protection Act, and list several useful addresses (but not the Club's - black mark there!).

Last of all is the Index (hurrah!) which contains most (but not all) of the things you would expect to find there (e.g. IF and INDEX are missing. The page number you require is 145).

I was disappointed by one weakness of this book: there has been a regular procession of books which go through the User Guide explaining how to use the Z88 in detail, but very few bother to cover any new ground. This book does explain mail-merging, but so has "Z88 Eprom" and two other books, so it is hardly a novelty.

I have used PipeDream to produce event planners (similar to those wall-chart things), time-tables, a salary calculator, and a diary processor (this takes assorted dates from various local organisations in any old order and sorts them by date ready for printing out one month at a time). I also use PipeDream for flow-charting and editing BASIC programs, collecting quotations and epigrams (using <>BSE to search for a given word - very useful for after-dinner speakers), browsing through the contents of the Filer (using <>CF and []+F;) files can be sorted into alphabetical order, or even size order (with some clever jiggery-pokery), printing multiple copies of documents, etc., etc., etc. I have had to invent most of these uses myself; there are very few original ideas in most Z88 books, and this one is no exception.

I have been accused by one Club member of being unreasonable. He tackled me at an "All Formats Computer Fair" in the spring, and said that he disagreed with my opinion. I am not trying to be unkind to the author. My point is that for fifteen quid I expect more than just a re-write of the User Guide.

So, is a book like this really necessary? (You will recall that this was the question the author posed on page 13.) If you are a new Z88 user, and the User Guide has left you confused then the answer quite possibly is "Yes". If you feel that you have mastered PipeDream and you want someone to widen your horizons then you had better look elsewhere. (Don't all write to me at once - I am a month behind with my correspondence as it is!)

"Z88 PipeDream: A Dabhand Guide" by John Allen; published by Dabs Press, 22 Warwick Street, Prestwich, Manchester. M25 7HN
Price £14.95.

PipeDream

PipeDream is now available for the IBM PC and compatibles, and the Acorn Archimedes. It has been completely rewritten for these computers and contains many new facilities, whilst retaining complete file and keyboard compatibility with the Z88.

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Books for Christmas

by Michael W. Hey (0703)

Christmas is approaching and to help you compile that prezzy list ready to be Emailed to the North Pole here is a summary of all the Z88 books that have been written. There are nine to choose from, but they cover a great deal of common ground, so you are not advised to get all of them.

I have assembled a little table (using PipeDream, of course) which lists the title, author, publisher and price. The price is only intended as a guide: some publishers may have had to raise their prices, and mail order companies may add an amount to cover postage.

The first section will be devoted to "explanatory" books in alphabetical order, followed by a look at programming guides.

So first of all: **Z88: A Dabhand Guide**. My review was highly critical of this book because I felt that the cover blurb promised so much, yet the contents delivered so little. This book elaborates on material in the User Guide, but that is all. Shortly after that I was tackled about this by a new Club member who told me that he had bought the book and enjoyed it tremendously, and had found it very clear and understandable. True, it is very clear and easy to read, but it contains some silly errors. VERDICT: £15 for an "upgraded" User Guide.

Z88 Computing, by Ian Sinclair. This was the first book to be written about the Z88, so a prize to Ian Sinclair for being quick off the mark.

I bought this book and enjoyed it: although it covers User Guide territory it is organised like a collection of notes. It is split into very short mini-chapters, each one covering one or two commands, together with plenty of practical advice to help you get started. I consider this to be the best of the "Beginner Books" for the Z88's built-in applications (and the cheapest). WARNING: there is NOTHING about BASIC programming.

Z88 Magic is generally regarded as being the best all-round book about the Z88. I have yet to hear an adverse comment from anyone.

The authors have adopted a policy of avoiding computerese where possible and explaining technicalities very clearly when they are required. This book was written by three Z88 enthusiasts who write from their experience, and it shows! As well as the traditional conducted tour round the User Guide they provide a wealth of additional material about PipeDream (including "mail-merge", CLIs, and BASIC programming.)

I have picked up many useful tips from "Z88 Magic". The BASIC section is the weakest part of the book - at 51 pages it can only skate across the surface of the subject, but the pirouettes are beautifully done! (I suppose that must count as half an adverse comment.)

Z88 PipeDream: A Dabhand Guide is reviewed elsewhere in this issue so I shall merely say that it falls into the explaining-the-User-Guide camp. John Allen's writing is very clear and easy to follow; however it is what is missing from the book which lets it down. I would call this book a wasted opportunity: apart from "mail-merge" there was little in this book that is not in the User Guide. An excellent book for PipeDream novices, but less suitable for the more experienced.

Z88 Portable Computing is ANOTHER beginner book! A review of this book is currently being prepared, so I can only offer very brief notes here. This is a very well written book, covering all aspects of the Z88. I would recommend this book to those who have experience of using another computer, and need to transfer their knowledge to the Z88.

I shall pause at this point to say that no one needs more than two of these books, unless they are building up a Z88 collection. They cover largely the same material and if you cannot understand the Z88 after reading two of them you are unlikely to benefit from a third.

Z88 Real Power Computing is like an antidote to the preceding titles. Frank Flaig worked in marketing, and his book is a collection of notes made by a Z88 user, full of practical tips, rather than a computer expert writing for the benefit of beginners. I enjoyed this book because of the wealth of original ideas and novel uses he suggests. As well as the "Guided Tour" there are several uses for the CLI, and reviews of third party software (now a little out of date).

Frank Flaig really puts PipeDream through its paces: I am not sure that the language translator would actually work, but it is a lovely idea and all sorts of other uses spring to mind. And "mail-merge" is here too! This book suffers from poor presentation. It looks as though it was printed at home in the attic, and it has no index. I would recommend it to jaded Z88 users who have passed the "beginner" stage, and need some fresh ideas.

And now on to section two:-

These three books comprise a programming guide to the Z88. They were not written as part of a set, so they overlap a bit, but taken as a whole they cover the subject quite thoroughly.

Using Your Z88 looks as though Patrick Hall started writing a beginner book and then thought better of it. After a brief guide to PipeDream and the Diary he gets thoroughly involved in BASIC programming. I enjoyed this book because his instructions and explanations are so clear. This is really excellent news if you own a Z88 and find BASIC programming completely baffling. Mr Hall promotes good practice like using PROCs and FNs rather than GOTOs. I should stress that he writes about BBC BASIC in general, and covers few Z88-specific commands like *NAME, which is why you will soon need the next book....

The Z88 BASIC Reference Manual must be the most eagerly-awaited book ever produced! In true Sinclair fashion it was announced when the Z88 was launched in Spring 1987, and not actually available until early 1989.

The more BASIC programming I do the more I find I need this book. It is indispensable for the serious programmer, being a comprehensive collection of BASIC commands and associated info. However, this is a reference book, and is not a course on BASIC programming. It assumes that you know what you are doing.

Finally, **The Z88 Software Developer's Guide** is the "Haynes Manual" of the Z88. It is the final word on software production: a tour round the boiler-room of the Z88. It covers all sorts of operating system commands and pieces of machine and assembly language required in the writing of Application software (like Z-Term, SpellMaster, Ranger Disk, or those clever EPROM checking programs by the likes of Steve Marsh). This is not a course in Z88 application writing, and it **really does** assume you know what you are doing.

At forty quid a time it is rather expensive to buy out of idle curiosity. I bought a copy two years ago and still only understand about 30% of it. I still cannot program in Z80 assembly language. (We all need an ambition, though, don't we?)

I hope this survey will be of use to our many members. None of these books could be called "useless", and none will be ideal for everybody. The greatest selection is available for beginners. It is up to you to choose the book which suits your requirements best. I hope that by studying this resume you will be able to make an informed choice. Happy reading!

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>When Reviewed....</u>
Z88: A Dabhand Guide	Trinity Concepts	Dabs Press	£14.95	Feb. 1990 4.1.22
Z88 Computing	Ian Sinclair	David Fulton	£ 9.95	May 1989 3.3.21
Z88 Magic	Gill and Vic Gerhardi & Andy Berry	Kuma	£14.95	Feb. 1990 4.1.20
Z88 PipeDream: A Dabhand Guide	John Allen	Dabs Press	£14.95	Nov. 1990 4.9.17
Z88 Portable Computing	Dave Osborne	Sigma Press	£12.95	Not yet!
Z88 Real Power Computing	F. R. Flaig	F. R. Flaig	£ 9.95	Feb. 1990 4.1.16
Using your Z88	Patrick Hall	Glentop Press	£10.00	Sept.1990 4.7.22
Z88 BASIC Reference Manual	D. J. Mounter	M-Tec	£14.50	March1989 3.2.14
Z88 Software Developers' Guide	Cambridge Computer Ltd.		£40.00	May 1990 4.4.24

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This 300 page illustrated book covers all the Z88 Applications. There are lots of examples and an abundance of TIPS. These point you in the right direction and show you the pitfalls.

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Z88 Magic - Published by Kuna Computers ISBN No: 07457 0137 X

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Library Corner

THIS month sees a few changes in the Library, most notably a change of address for comms users to **Direct Line BBS**, as detailed after this update by Steve Manners, sysop of Direct Line. Additionally, we are moving a step closer to having an Amiga sub-librarian.

As far as the Library programs are concerned, Salvador Merino (2268) has supplied updates for his two offerings, **Z083** and **Z109**. This latter is his FORTH interpreter, now V2.00. The source code for both is available on request.

In addition, the following programs have been added:

Z125-6 Two by Richard Boam (2891)

- Z125** LIST-COMP.BAS will compile list (".I") files or a catalogue of files. 7.5K
A=documentation
B=program
- Z126** INDEXER.BAS uses a nominated printer highlight to produce a plain text file index of a PipeDream document. 13K
A=documentation
B=program
- Z127** CROCODILE HUNT. A simple game submitted by Dr.Graham Cox(3946). 2K
- Z128** Z80DIS. A Z80 disassembler by Keith Rickard(1010). 10K
A=documentation
B=BASIC driver
C=M/C program

Ian Braby MRPharmS - Software Librarian

A Message for Z88/PSION/PC Comms Users

As many of you will be aware, a London Bulletin Board called Kybernesis was, until recently, making the Z88 User Group Library available for download. It also housed a large collection of other Z88 and Psion Software for download. Sadly, Kybernesis has now closed down.

That's the bad news over with!

The VERY good news is that ALL Z88 and PSION files from Kybernesis have been rehoused on a London based online system called Direct-Line. These are in addition to the large Z88 and Psion file areas which were already available on Direct-Line.

Direct-Line has been operating for approx. 3 years now and is already very well known to most PC users with modems.

Some details re Direct-Line:

Telephone Numbers:

Direct-Line 1	081-841-1847	300/1200/1200-75/2400
Direct-Line 2	081-842-2030	300/1200/2400 + 9600 & 14.4k HST
Direct-Line 3	081-842-4076	300/1200/1200-75/2400

Correct settings for your comms software are 8 bits, No Parity, and 1 stop bit (8/N/1).

The system operates 3 nodes as you can see above. It also allows live chat (and games playing) between the three nodes.

Also as you'll see above, just about every speed is available so almost any modem will work with Direct-Line...right up to the super fast new HST 14.4k modems now available. (For those who can afford them!)

The system allows you to set things up to suit your tastes. Most PC users choose to have Colour displays switched on and 23 lines of info per screen. Those calling with a Z88 though may prefer to have 8 lines per screen, and mono displays. You can also turn menus off using the [H] for help level settings and just have a command line prompt - ideal when calling with a Z88.

Direct-Line is so large, and operates on a Novell Network etc mainly because it is supported by it's users via an annual subscription. There are various options available for membership and the best way to get full details is to call the system and get them direct. Full 'Line-Backer' Membership is the recommended option, and many Z88 Club members are already also Direct-Line members. The Sysops of Direct-Line are happy to offer other forms of membership for those wishing to just access the Z88/Psion areas however, and those wishing to just use DLine for this should leave a message to

'SYSOP' on Direct-Line and some form of Z88/Psion only access will be arranged for a nominal sub.

For those who own a PC Direct-Line a few facts re DLine may be of interest:

The system houses tens of thousands of PC files - well over a Gigabyte (1,000 megabytes!) of software in all.

A number of well known Comms/PC companies call Direct-Line on a regular basis and answer questions from Members. Among Direct-Lines members are very major companies such as Amstrad Plc. The system has a very active message area with facilities for offline message writing and reading. It also has over 100 bulletins of useful information - these are constantly being updated. They also include hints and tips and user reviews etc.

So - hope to see you on Direct-Line soon!

Steve Manners - Sysop - Direct Line

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Z88 Users' Club EPROM vouchers given with all the above except Star Buy of the Month.
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